

THE RESEARCH'S CONDITIONS OF THE GEOGRAPHER AND THE TRANSCULTURAL GEOGRAPHY'S RESPONSES. COME BACK TO FIVE YEARS OF OBSERVATION IN FEZ (MOROCCO, 1996-2000)

Walter LANCHET

University of Tours, France

1. Introduction

In the context of an academic work, the researcher-observer-collector we have been, can decide what's important for someone else unilaterally : "Each theory selects among the different aspects of a phenomenon that the theory regards as pertinent in its framework of reference." (...) "The theory as the representations is a riddle and a press. That defines the type and the quantity of informations which we can get from a phenomenon." (Canter Kohn 1998 : 206). And the same schemes of the perception are inserted into the writing of some "*in situ* - observations". According to Ruth Canter Kohn, "studying the results of the observation gives access to the process of their making." (Canter Kohn 1998 : 207). That's the tool of our demonstration too.

2. The madina of Fez as observation's ground

The social space of the contemporary madina of Fez (Morocco) is made up of a complex whole of phenomena linked to a placed observation's situation. The place where we practised the observation, the number of concerned persons, the complexity of individual actions and the different interactions which we are the investigator, are some sides of our demonstration. The urban heritage's safeguarding was a key-reading for our study of the social space of the madina in its spatial, social, economic size. Our challenge as geographer is the articulation of some different realities. In Fez-Madina, our empirical analyses shall be the result of our immersion and familiarity with the urban lifestyle.

The international appraisals picked out the originality of the site : its urban layout might be quite similar to the european cities from the Middle Age. This acceptance stigmatizes the "archaïsm" of an original way of life, a sociability, a civism. At the same time, in Fez, the safeguarding process instituted by the UNDP (1992) and the World Bank (1995) is blocked because of the very centralized and traditionalist moroccan political regime as much as the inadaptability of the international appraisers' recommandations. In fact, the urbanism's programs of safeguarding and the rehabilitation of the madina could threaten the social control of the monarchic Makhzen-State - the Caïds, the Mokhadems, the notability's network linked to the political regime - The Makhzen's regime would integrate the functionalism of the international planners in order to improve and reinforce its urban management inside the madina. Also the national newspapers have already designed the madina as an insanitary district - as another informal outer development (the shanty town) - in order to justify some (unapplied) dedensification and accessibility's measures. As social sciences' researcher, we introduced some other explanations to the endogenous safeguarding's practices, the cultural differences between the expectations of the international appraisers and the local inhabitants.

In Morocco, the indigenuous management of the daily life's space (garbage collection, local policy, street lighting, etc...) is based on a social body (the family's members, the neighbors). The informality of that organization of (spatial and affective) proximity reinforces the civil society and diminishes the public authorities' commitments in the supply of public equipments, transits, services and rules. Abdelghani Abouhane notes: "The local power is not synonymous with the local administration. That develops cut off from the State's bureaucracy, inside its weaknesses." (Abouhane, 1988). Inside the madina, other cultural codes, values and references' systems are relevant. The spaces and performances' standards, the urban practices of the inhabitants of Fez-Madina is different from the standards and the representation of the consultant architect and urbanist. For example, the traditional maâlem-craftsmen can consolidate the structure without any alteration. The local patrimonial revendication is in the respect of an original way of life, in the "together-being"'s wish.

In place of Kalkiyine's neighborhood, our observations pointed at the commitment of one man. That man was the Governor of Fez-Madina who was one of the local mediator with some appraisers of the World Bank. His will was to create a "Cellule" of concertation opened to the populations and not only to the public authorities. In the context of the urban action, he - as "fils de la médina" ("Madina's Son" literally) representing the traditional hawma (neighborhood's community) - mobilized the civil society through an activity of social mediation and the traditional collective solidarity and he managed the clearing away of a ruin inside the Kalkiyine's neighborhood. So he was engaged in the safeguarding process officially and personally.

Our empirical analysis of that personal and punctual commitment could show the bundle of local powers and counter-powers to us. We would have explained the different brackets of the urban production inside the old city of Fez, its limits and its blockings up. Those blockings up of the safeguarding's process was linked to the conception of the urban actors' projects rather than the urban environment of the madina itself. Observing and listening to the populations of Fez-Madina were our own way of keeping a certain serenity in the knowledge's process about them and their daily problems. The dialogue is often possible between the institutional administrators and the administrated populations : the madina's inhabitants have already "appropriated" the urban space and they're claiming their right of having access to the city and its equipments. But the public authorities aren't listening to them.

3. The power of ideology on the knowledge's production about the madina-city and the urban planning's practices

Our geographical research is based on the reading of the "madina"-object and the thought about the frame conditioning our reading locally.

In the situation of an active observation, our mind was opened to what it was happening around. Understanding the acts' meaning to the "actors" meant switching from some external to some internal "views" from the geographical space of Fez-Madina. The empathy has often been strong between our interlocutors and us. Our observation's experimentation integrated the concrete daily life and helped us to define the concept of "heritage" and its different meanings and representations. The link between past, present, future explains the "patrimonial" size inside the inter-individual relationships of our interlocutors, inside and outside the socio-institutional or socio-historical powers' dynamic. The official safeguarding's operators have never been clear about the rules and the objectives. The institutional urban planning practice was unknown from the populations because they didn't understand what it was happening. The "technical explanations" to the inhabitants from the Dedensification and Rehabilitation of Fez-Madina Agency (ADER-Fez) or the "popular education" from some french appraisers' recommendations should have been efficient.

But the populations and we were staying in the dark about the political choices: Who's doing what ? What's the urban policy ? What will they safeguard ? And why are they safeguarding the historic madina's settlements ?

None of those questions found a final answer : the inhabitants weren't waiting for any external support in order to satisfy the water and power supplies. The planning laws were dated, old and many local administrators didn't know them.

To us, each evidence became a very important fact in our work of observation and listening to every individuals locally. We kept in touch with every political, economical, cultural actors of the safeguarding. Before defining any urban policy, we looked for knowing if they have already taken care of the popular initiatives, the madina's inhabitants' needs and daily practices, and not only the financial and technical constraints from the forecasted appraisals. Whatever we were doing, the point of our person-resources was crucial. Also we spent a lot of time with the populations of the madina, the professionals of traditional architecture, and with some local politicians in Fez, Rabat, Casablanca. Our own urban daily life's practice was the beginning of each investigation about the safeguarding and the patrimonial topics. We were building our research's project in connection with what we were knowing day after day.

- Our key question was : To whom take advantages of the institution of the urban safeguarding ?

- Our general hypothesis was : The madina's social space would be the frame within the safeguarding protagonists has been developed their strategies locally. And the tools of the urban policy would be the normalization and the integration of the social space of the madina.

In Fez, despite international recommendations from UNESCO (1986), the UNDP (1992) and the World Bank (1995), there is no improvement of living conditions in the madina. Dedensification and accessibility were the appraisers' answers to the madina's problems. But the functionalist conception of these international proposals weren't the moroccan Makhzen-State / national public power's. A technical appraiser was only the instrument of the officials because he is "the only one who gets the know-how, the experience of the global organization in order to resolve the crucial problems" (Crozier 1977 : 72) of the urban safeguarding. The local appraisers could get a power from their professional and institutional condition : they became a potential powerful actor of the program and influenced the local organizational strategies. In fact, the administration, the practices and the finances' control were centralized on the Dedensification and Rehabilitation of Fez-Madina Agency, very closed to the Makhzen-State.

The functionalist direction of the safeguarding process territorialized the urban planning practice. That means:

- the local urban planning (Master Plan, Hydraulic Plan) defined the needs globally and stated the feasibility's hypothesis ;

- the projection concerned the space, the time, the cost of the programs : that projection was composed by some sectorial studies in order to assess the technical and financial constraints ;

- the final decision of the building's beginning depend of the programs' cost, the political choice, the organizational strategy.

The functionalism of the international appraisers and the traditionalism of the moroccan Makhzen-State made some dissensions. First, the urban planning practice interferes with the ideology's conflict ; then the (national and international) power-knowledge re-occurs the domination's relations locally. The urban planning codified the local safeguarding's acts : it was an urban organizational and institutional control. In Rabat (the political capital-city), in Casablanca (the economic capital-city) and in Fez, most of our interlocutors were quite critical about the institutional programs of safeguarding and rehabilitation.

The moroccan traditionalism is always relevant. In the madina itself, the inhabitants has always supported urban management. The people satisfy their daily needs and some individuals - the so called "fils de la médina" - are the privileged mediators of the Makhzen. Their social legitimacy and their socio-political rule are a key point of the current safeguarding process.

4. From the ideological taking over to the patrimonialization: What may it happen in Fez-Madina ? The urban "saveguarding", what for ?

In the contemporary Morocco, talking about Fez-Madina means telling the story of its "saveguarding". The "madina"-city of Fez, the historical place of the first nationalist activities of the future Makhzen-State, is protected by some colonial ordinances current. In Fez, a Historical Monuments' Conservator is appointed to control the jurisdiction of protection. And the urban order of the historic city with its active mosques and souks has justified the recognition of Fez-Madina as "World Heritage" (UNESCO, 1981).

But the "madinas" and Fez in particular are some urban shapes and nothing else for most of the Moroccans we met. Out of misunderstanding or/and disinterest, the urbanism's professionals' disregard is flagrant for some "spaces that have been elaborated without any urban planning". To them, the "madina" means something that's "abstract", "artificial". But through the institution of a patrimonialized "Madina", the madina is became a special space in which the tradition is sanctified : the reference to the tradition is systematic about the "madina" henceforth.

The Fassis from the madina of Fez say : "To understand the madina, stay and live there!" ; we are convinced by that and we have always taken care of the social dynamics inside the madina. Nevertheless, despite our empirical work in Fez, our local interlocutors were upset

about the sacrality of the madina and we didn't succeed to get an objective approach from the safeguarding's deal. The archaism of the urban structure of the madina may justify the global "re-functionalization" of the urban space (reasonable access, pollutant relocation) and the economical and symbolical re-using of the buildings (Ethnological Museum of traditional art in order to satisfy a "cultural" tourism). We come to the conclusion that the madina of Fez and the patrimonial preoccupations may be instrumentalized by those who decide the future of the madina without living there. The institution of the madina as a patrimonialized space may be the result of the urbanist ideology mobilized to copy the functionalist urban model of the "modern city". The social space of the madina shall disappear and its patrimonialization shall be used to build an exotic decor for the touristic deambulation.

To contest that symbolic appropriation of a patrimonial madina, a shopkeeper of the madina - for whom the populations of the madina was more and more depressed because of the blocked situation - asked us the question: "Is the loss of profit of the Makhzen more relevant than its breach of contract to take care of the poorest inhabitants' situation ?" (Fez, 1996). That question should conclude his story of the neighborhood's mobilization. Many inhabitants regained consciousness of the deterioration of the old buildings' structure, the danger of living there. The populations have supported urban management and satisfied their daily needs. The punctual neighborhood's mobilization was an event and everybody kept it in their mind later. But the shopkeeper of the madina thought the inhabitants didn't have enough confidence. They didn't trust in the public commitment and most of them preferred leaving the madina. Only the poorest stayed and lived in madina because they didn't have another choice.

We met a lady who felt concerned by the madina's deal after her collaboration with the World Bank's delegates (1995). Mrs L.T. lives in Fez and she has already written some papers about the safeguarding's process, the emergency of a financial support of the madina's inhabitants. She has met some national politicians and international appraisers. She will explain her views to us. The patrimonialization of Fez-Madina "makes sense" because it is "the historical trace of our national past". The madina symbolizes "our tradition through every authentic know-hows": "It's important to keep our landmarks and to recognize Fez in its original unity".

The Fassis deserted their ancestral houses thirty years ago. Some of them are feeling "guilty" about the present situation in madina. But many owners blame the pauperization of the city, even if they didn't live there and go to the madina anymore. They haven't maintained the building year after year, and the residents refuse to pay the rent because of the insalubrity. Nowadays, some moroccan and european "intellectuals" and scholars only speak about their "love" of the madina's lifestyle again. The romantism of the nostalgia, the place's fascination explain the actual touristic attraction for the madina of Fez in particular. The international event placing the Fez-Madina as part of the "World Heritage" (UNESCO 1981) impuled several few practices and introduced a new look coming from the outside to the inside of the madina. Several individuals have already re-invested their family house which their family's members had abandoned.

In this context, intellectuals and artists came in Fez and re-discovered the madina. Many clichés spreads : the tourists come inside the madina and they look for the donkeys, the craftsmakers, the typical "arab" lifestyle and food. Several vernacular architectural forms are exhibited as authentic fine arts inside a museal space ; craftsmen's know-hows are put forward as typical signs of ancestral "fassie" traditions... Actually some parts of the Fez-Madina's land are being taken over, "appropriated" physically and symbolically. The contemporary geographical imaginations, based on orientalist imaginary as well as particular memories are used to re-elaborate an ideal-typical Madina.

From thepoint of view of Mrs L.T., the "fassi" problem is the contradiction between the "traditionalist attempts" and the "modernist attempts" of safeguarding the city : the "prestige of an authentic lifestyle" from the outside and the "rejection of a blocked life" from the inside. The conditions become more and more unbearable inside the madina and the nostalgia influences the Makhzen's politics outside the madina again. "The inertia is strongly averse to the madina. The holistic program of the Makhzen and the international appraisals are too ambitious. We will need one hundred years in order to savegarde the city, not ten years as they planned !".

The moroccan authorities are waiting for the financial support from the international organizations as the World Bank and most of the politicians may be irresponsible in the present situation. The consequence is : "an unfortunate consciousness" is spreading inside the minds and the madina's inhabitants are the first victims of the situation. A french architect living in Rabat tells : "We are talking about Fez-madina too much". "The urban planning exists and the last problem is juridical : the "saveguarding's programs" aren't mentioned...". In Fez, the Historical Monuments' Conservator may have only a "consultation's rule" about the choices of saveguarding, the priorities of rehabilitation, and he doesn't have any financial and technical independence : the Dedensification and Rehabilitation of Fez-Madina Agency (ADER-Fez) has the control of the programs. He concludes : "When a monumental building is saveguarded, a lot of other buildings are destroyed by the time". The problematic question is : "Shall the madina become a museum-city ?" Nobody said : "Yes". So even if a medersa (religious building) isn't a "monument" and stays a "place of worship", the discussions have always no end about the manners and the choices of a common policy between every urban actors of the saveguarding. The ADER is efficient locally. Because of that, some craftsmakers have got some work and could valorize their know-hows inside and outside the madina.

But "everything has to be done..." : access way, technical assistance, sewer system. The appraisals piled up and the World Bank should have brought its contribution (1998). The emergency of a concrete and dynamizing program may change the deal inside the madina. We met many persons feeling concerned about the situation inside the madina of Fez. However, is the saveguarding on the moroccan authorities and the Makhzen's agenda really ? From the prophetic city of the "fassi" stories about Fez - The "Fabulous City" to the global utopia of the "World Heritage City", the madina of Fez is staying an imaginary and mythical place to those who don't live there.

The rehabilitation of the historic urban space of Fez is not a national priority. That may stay a very expensive extravagance for many moroccan politicians. The present programs shall concern some touristic places only and they exclude the inhabitants' needs unfortunately.

REFERENCES

- Abouhani A., 1988, *Pouvoir local et espace urbain au Maroc. Cas de Tabriquet Nord à Salé*, Thèse de Doctorat, Département de Droit, Université de Rabat, 469 p.
- Abu Lughod L. J., 1984, *Rabat. Urban apartheid in Morocco*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 345 p.
- Al Sayyad N. (ed.), 1992, *Forms of dominance on the architecture and urbansim of the colonial entreprise*. Aldershot, Avebury Press, 355 p.
- Bachelard G., 1957, *La poétique de l'espace*, Paris, PUF, 214 p.
- Barbier R., 1997, *L'approche transversale. L'écoute sensible en sciences humaines*, Paris, Anthropos, 357 p.
- Canter Kohn R., 1998, *Les enjeux de l'observation*, Anthropos, Paris, 227 p.
- Claval P., 2000, *Géographie culturelle*, Paris, Nathan, 328 p.
- Crozier M. and Friedberg E., 1977, *L'acteur et le système. Les contraintes de l'action collective*, Paris, Seuil, 504 p.
- Di Méo G., 1996, *L'Homme, l'Espace et la Société*, Paris, Anthropos, 319 p.
- Gregory D., 1994, *Geographical Imaginations*, Cambridge - Oxford. Blackwell, 433 p.
- Lefebvre H., 1986, *La production de l'espace*, Paris, Anthropos, 48 p.
- Navez-Bouchanine F., 1995, *La sauvegarde de la médina de Fès*. Rabat. Rapport de synthèse pour la World Bank, 16 p.
- Schutz A., 1987, *Le chercheur et le quotidien. Phénoménologie des sciences sociales*, Paris, Méridiens Klincksieck, 286 p.
- UNDP - Ministère de l'Intérieur du Maroc - Groupe Huit - URBAPLAN - SIDES, 1992, *Sauvegarde de la ville de Fès. Rapports techniques et Rapport de synthèse*, 2 t., 925 p.
- UNESCO, 1972, *Convention concernant la promotion du Patrimoine mondial*, Paris, 10 p.

